



# LAND USE SERVICES DEPARTMENT PLANNING STAFF REPORT



HEARING DATE: August 24, 2006

AGENDA ITEM NO: 3

## Project Description

**Applicant:** Land Use Services Department  
**Proposal:** General Plan Update project to include: an update of the County General Plan goals, policies and maps (including associated land use district changes); the establishment of 13 community plans; and a complete revision to Title 8 of the San Bernardino County Code (the Development Code).  
**Index:** CW1-849N  
**CATS:** 00243CQ0  
**Community:** Countywide  
**Location:** Countywide  
**Staff:** Randy Scott

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## Background

The Board of Supervisors (Board) authorized the start of the General Plan Update program in 2001 and provided some overall expectations for revisions to the current (1989) General Plan. The Board directed that the update produce a document that is more policy oriented, more concise and easier to use, and more conventional in its format. The Board approved a program that consisted of two distinct phases (referred to as Phase I and Phase II).

The first phase was a strategic analysis of the 1989 General Plan, as amended. The Phase I analysis was designed to provide recommendations for Board consideration. The Board's endorsement of a final set of recommendations was intended to define the scope of work for the preparation of the new General Plan (Phase II). The consultant hired to prepare the Phase I analysis identified 18 specific recommendations to guide the Phase II Update; the consultants also performed an initial evaluation of all existing goals and policies in the 1989 Plan. The Board adopted those recommendations on August 6, 2002 with minor adjustments. Important additional tasks to the update program were also endorsed by the Board. Those tasks included re-instating Community Plans that were eliminated in 1989, completing a comprehensive revision to the County's Development Code to modernize and streamline the document, and provide focused zoning-level analysis in the West Fontana and Mentone areas, two rapidly growing areas that have never undergone comprehensive review. The Phase I Evaluation also made process-oriented recommendations that called for a public involvement process that included extensive public meetings throughout the County and established a General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) made up of community members to represent a broad cross-section of County unincorporated areas.

## Phase II General Plan Update Process

Phase II of the San Bernardino County General Plan Update was launched in the summer of 2003 following award of a contract to the planning consulting firm of URS Corporation to assist staff with the update process. The contract included a specific scope of work that responded to the recommendations of the Phase I Evaluation. The scope of work outlined a three-year planning

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Action taken by the Planning Commission on this item may be appealed to the Board. Yes ☐ No ☒  
Note: Recommendations to the Board of Supervisors are not appealable.

process that provided for significant public involvement. The scope of work also identified the following specific work products that would result from the planning effort:

- A Vision Statement
- Background Reports for each General Plan Element
- 13 Community Plans
- Draft Goals and Policies Report
- Updated General Plan
- Updated Development Code
- Environmental Impact Report.

### **Public Participation – the foundation to the General Plan Update**

Extensive public participation has been a hallmark of this General Plan Update. Numerous community meetings were held during the early months of the program to establish a foundation for preparation of a Vision Statement. Further community meetings were included in the Community Plan process and monthly meetings of the GPAC, which were open to the public, were held from June 2003 to April 2006. In all, there were 23 community meetings for the visioning process, 35 community meetings and 18 committee meetings during preparation of the Community Plans, and 30 GPAC meetings.

## **PRODUCTS OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE**

### **Vision Statement**

The first step in the GPU process involved the preparation of a Vision Statement. The purpose of the Vision Statement was to provide guidance in developing General Plan goals and set a frame of reference for the General Plan and its related components. The vision for the General Plan was prepared using extensive public outreach. Public outreach provided an opportunity to “get the word out” about the General Plan Update and collect information from County residents regarding important attributes about San Bernardino County that should be retained or improved through the General Plan. The Vision Statement was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in 2004. The goals and policies of the General Plan, the Development Code, and the Community Plans have been drafted to help achieve the vision for the future of the County.

### **Preparation of Background Reports**

In order to provide both an initial reference point and a technical source of data for the GPU, Background Reports were prepared for each of the seven mandatory elements and one optional element of the General Plan. These Background Reports provide the environmental, institutional and legal setting for the preparation of the General Plan and associated documents.

### **Preparation of Community Plans**

Another key component of the General Plan is the 13 Community Plans which have been prepared for selected communities. The Community Plans identify goals and policies that are unique to each particular community. The Phase I Evaluation of the General Plan Update recommended that Community Plans be reinstated as a planning component of the General Plan framework to provide community-specific development guidance within these 13 communities. Community Plans focus on recognized, intact communities that are experiencing, or are anticipated to experience, growth pressures. Community Plans must be consistent with the General Plan. Community Plans build upon the goals and policies of each element of the General Plan. Community Plan goals and policies have been customized to meet the specific needs or unique circumstances of individual

communities. The goals and policies within Community Plans guide development in a manner that maintains the existing balance of land uses, preserves the character of the community, and complements existing development. To aid County staff and the consultants, Advisory Committees were established for each Community Plan area. These committees provided invaluable assistance in formulating the community goals and policies and facilitating public input into each plan. The following are the proposed Community Plans within the unincorporated areas of the County:

Bear Valley  
Bloomington  
Crest Forest  
Hilltop  
Homestead Valley  
Joshua Tree  
Lake Arrowhead

Lucerne Valley  
Lytle Creek  
Morongo Valley  
Muscoy  
Oak Glen  
Phelan/Pinon Hills

A fourteenth plan, the Oak Hills Community Plan, was adopted as part of a joint effort with the City of Hesperia in 2003. Since this plan is already in effect, the format of the plan is all that needs to be amended to be consistent with the 13 new plan that have been prepared. Once the General Plan Update documents have been formerly adopted, the Oak Hills Community Plan will be amended to achieve this consistency in format.

### **Draft Goals and Policies Report**

The Phase I Evaluation recommended that , in order to satisfy the objectives of the Board, the organization of the new General Plan should format the goals and policies according to the seven state-required General Plan elements: Land Use, Circulation and Infrastructure, Housing, Conservation, Open Space, Noise and Safety. In addition, consistent with the Phase I recommendations, an Economic Development Element was included as an elective element for the Plan. The Draft Goals and Policies Report was prepared to facilitate an initial review of a comprehensive set of updated goals and policies by the GPAC and the public. Following GPAC acceptance of the report, it was subsequently presented to the Planning Commission for consideration. The Draft Goals and Policies Report was ultimately made available to the Board of Supervisors. In addition, the draft goals and policies contained in the report were presented with annotations that referenced their origin, i.e. re-written from the 1989 General Plan, based on the Vision Statement, or in response to a legal requirement. The annotation format will be carried forward through the hearing process until final adoption by the Board to provide for continuing reference as needed.

### **Updated General Plan**

The State of California requires each city and county to prepare and adopt a general plan to identify goals, policies and programs to guide future development of that jurisdiction. Each general plan in the state is required to address a variety of issues through the preparation of elements, or chapters, organized by topic. The seven required elements are land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise and safety. The County last prepared an update of the County's General Plan in 1989. Since its adoption, the General Plan has been amended on numerous occasions to accommodate land use designation changes as well as policy changes.

The update to the General Plan provides a projection of growth in the County through the year 2030. Text, tables and maps in the draft General Plan identify goals and policies that will guide the development of residential, commercial, industrial, public facilities, transportation facilities and other uses that are desired by the public and decision makers. The consultant team hired to

prepare the General Plan Update documents included the firm of Stanley R. Hoffman Associates, Inc. who conducted a detailed analysis of the build-out capacity of the 1989 General Plan relative to residential densities and non-residential building intensities for the unincorporated areas of the County. This firm also analyzed population growth trends and computed estimated totals for population, the number of households and employment opportunities for the year 2030. These figures were critical in analyzing potential impacts on the environment associated with the increased population and preparing measures to mitigate these impacts. Another consultant, John Husing of Economics and Politics, Inc., prepared an Economic Development Report that was the basis for the development of the Economic Development Element of the General Plan. The forecasts presented in the Husing report enabled staff and the consultant team to compose viable goals and policies relative to economic development that link to the Economic Strategy adopted in 2005 by the Board of Supervisors.

### **Updated Development Code**

The proposed San Bernardino Development Code (Title 8 of the County Code) would replace the existing Development Code in its entirety. The Development Code implements the goals and policies of the General Plan by classifying and regulating the uses of land and structures within the County. The purpose of the Development Code is to promote and protect the public health, safety and general welfare of County residents. The Development Code is the mechanism that implements the County General Plan, including policies contained in the various Community Plans. To satisfy one of the overall objectives of the Board, the Development Code has been rewritten to modernize the document to be more understandable and user-friendly.

### **General Plan EIR**

The final critical step in the GPU process, is the preparation of the EIR. The Notice of Preparation (NOP) for the Draft EIR was released on October 5, 2005. The purpose of the NOP was to provide a description of the GPU process, to provide information on the environmental issues which the County identified for analysis in the draft EIR, and to seek input on the environmental analysis that will be conducted by the County. Three scoping meetings were held in late October 2005 for the purpose of soliciting input from the public regarding any specific issues which anyone felt the EIR should address. Since that time, the Draft EIR is nearing completion and will be released on or around September 1, 2006.

### **General Plan Text**

Over the next several weeks, staff has scheduled four additional public hearings before the Commission to present different aspects of the GPU. The primary topic which is being presented at the August 24th Planning Commission hearing is the General Plan document focusing on the format, style and content of the plan. The substantive material contains the proposed goals and policies for eight elements, which were incorporated from the Draft Goals and Policies Report previously presented to the Commission during one of the GPU workshops. The revised General Plan text is a compilation of those current General Plan goals and policies that have been determined to be essential for inclusion in the update and those new goals and policies that have been developed based on the adopted Vision Statement. Most of the goals and policies contained in the General Plan apply countywide. However, staff has also tailored some goals and policies that apply only to one or two of the regions of the County – Valley, Mountain or Desert. For example, the goals and policies relative to the preservation of the night sky apply only to the Mountain and Desert Regions. The next step down from these regional goals and policies are those found in the Community Plans which are intended to be focused on and applied to just those local areas.

## **HIGHLIGHTS OF THE NEW GENERAL PLAN**

The following is a summary of the “new look” of the General Plan:

- Goals and policies have been added to implement the adopted Vision Statement.
- The text has been organized by element.
- The volume of the plan has been reduced by removing technical standards and guidelines that should not be included in a General Plan and by removing ineffective or unimplementable goals and policies.
- The General Plan Implementation Guide identifies a responsible entity for implementation of all policies and programs.
- An Economic Development Element has been added to the plan.
- An analysis of the 2030 forecast traffic volumes has been conducted and goals and policies pertaining to this analysis have been included in the plan.
- The mapped Improvement Level concept has been eliminated and replaced by Infrastructure Standards that will be added to the Development Code. These standards will be based on the density and intensity of the use.
- Planning Areas are being eliminated and replaced by expanding the goals and policies of the three regional areas of the County (Valley, Mountain and Desert) and by the adoption of 13 Community Plans.

## **SCHEDULE OF FUTURE PLANNING COMMISSION HEARINGS**

Four additional public meeting have been noticed to the public. They are as follows:

September 7, 2006	This meeting will focus on the Desert Community Plans
September 21, 2006	This meeting will focus on the Mountain Community Plans
October 5, 2006	This meeting will focus on the Valley Community Plans, General Plan Mapping and Hotspot Analyses
October 19, 2006	This meeting will focus revisions to the Development Code

Staff will schedule one concluding public meeting before the Planning Commission on December 7, 2006 for the Commission to review the Final EIR including all comments received and responses to those comments along with any revisions to previously considered documents. The Commission will make its recommendation to the Board of Supervisors at that time. Staff is anticipating forwarding the GPU to the Board for its consideration in late December.

## **Recommendation**

CONTINUE the hearing on the General Plan Update to September 7, 2006 to consider Community Plans within the Desert Region.

## **Exhibit**

[Revised General Plan Text](#)